C. Introduction to the NASB

Because Orwell Bible Church uses primarily the New American Standard Bible (1995), we'll take a little time to learn about this translation. If you use a different translation, much of what is covered here probably applies to yours as well! What follows is at the front of every NASB—

1) Forward and Fourfold Aim

Scriptural Promise "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever," Isaiah 40:8

The New American Standard Bible has been produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek were inspired by God. Since they are the eternal Word of God, the Holy Scriptures speak with fresh power to each generation, to give wisdom that leads to salvation, that men may serve Christ to the glory of God.

The fourfold aim of the Lockman Foundation (the organization responsible for publishing the NASB)

a. These publications shall be true to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
b. They shall be grammatically correct.
c. They shall be understandable.
d. They shall give the Lord Jesus Christ His proper place, the place which the Word gives Him; therefore, no work will ever be personalized.

2) Preface

In the history of English Bible translations, the King James Version is the most prestigious. This time-honored version of 1611, itself a revision of the Bishops' Bible of 1568, became the basis for the English Revised Version appearing in 1881 (New Testament) and 1885 (Old Testament). The American counterpart of this last work was published in 1901 as the American Standard Version. The ASV, a product of both British and American scholarship, has been highly regarded for its scholarship and accuracy. Recognizing the values of the American Standard Version, the Lockman Foundation felt an urgency to preserve these and other lasting values of the ASV by incorporating recent discoveries of Hebrew and Greek textual sources and by rendering it into more current English. Therefore, in 1959 a new translation project was launched, based on the time-honored principles of translation of the ASV and KJV. The result is the New American Standard Bible.

Translation work for the NASB was begun in 1959. In the preparation of this work numerous other translations have been consulted along with the linguistic tools and literature of biblical scholarship. Decisions about English renderings were made by consensus of a team composed of educators and pastors. Subsequently, review and evaluation by other Hebrew and Greek scholars outside the Editorial Board were sought and carefully considered.

The Editorial Board has continued to function since publication of the complete Bible in 1971. This edition of the NASB represents revisions and refinements recommended over the last several years as well as thorough research based on modern English usage.

3) Principles of Translation

a. **Modern English Usage**: The attempt has been made to render the grammar and terminology in contemporary English. When it was felt that the word-for-word literalness was unacceptable to the modern reader, a change was made in the direction of a more current English idiom. In the instances where this has been done, the more literal rendering has been indicated in the notes. There are a few exceptions to this procedure. In particular, frequently "And" is not translated at the beginning of sentences because of differences in style between ancient and modern writing. Punctuation is a relatively modern invention, and ancient writers often linked most of their sentences with "and" or other connectives. Also, the Hebrew idiom "answered and said" is sometimes reduced to "answered" or "said" as demanded by the context. For current English the idiom "it came about that" has not been translated in the New Testament except when a major transition is needed.

NOTE: Keep in mind that ancient writings did not make use of bold face, underlining, periods, commas, or other formatting marks. To indicate the kind of changes those marks make, they used what they had available— words!

See page 20 for an example of marginal note identifying a "more literal rendering"

b. **Alternative Readings:** In addition to the more literal renderings, notations have been made to include alternate translations, reading of variant manuscripts and explanatory equivalents of the text. Only such notations have been used as have been felt justified in assisting the reader's comprehension of the terms used by the original author.

See page 20 for an example of an "alternative reading."

c. **Hebrew Text**: In the present translation the latest edition of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* has been employed together with the most recent light from lexicography, cognate languages, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

d. **Hebrew Tenses:** Consecution of tenses in Hebrew remains a puzzling factor in translation. The translators have been guided by the requirements of a literal translation, the sequence of tenses, and the immediate and broad contexts.

e. **The Proper Name of God in the Old Testament:** In the Scriptures, the name of God is most significant and understandably so. It is inconceivable to think of spiritual matters without a proper designation for the Supreme Deity. Thus the most common name for the Deity is God, a translation of the original Elohim. One of the titles for God is Lord, a translation of Adonai. There is yet another name which is

particularly assigned to God as His special or proper name, that is, the four letters YHWH (Exodus 3:14 and Isaiah 42:8). This name has not been pronounced by the Jews because of reverence for the great sacredness of the divine name. Therefore, it has been consistently translated LORD. The only exception to this translation of YHWH is when it occurs in immediate proximity to the word Lord, that is, Adonai. In that case it is regularly translated GOD in order to avoid confusion. It is known that for many years YHWH as been transliterated as Yahweh, however no complete certainty attaches to this pronunciation.

f. **Greek Text:** Consideration was given to the latest available manuscripts with a view to determining the best Greek text. In most instances the 26th edition of Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* was followed.

g. **Greek Tenses:** A careful distinction has been made in the treatment of the Greek aorist tense (usually translated as the English past, "He did") and the Greek imperfect tense (normally rendered either as English past progressive, "He was doing"; or, if inceptive, as "He began to do" or "He started to do"; or else if customary past, as "He used to do"). "Began" is italicized if it renders an imperfect tense, in order to distinguish it from the Greek verb for "begin." In some contexts the difference between the Greek imperfect and the English past is conveyed better by the choice of vocabulary or by other words in the context, and in such cases the Greek imperfect may be rendered as a simple past tense (e.g. "had an illness for many years" would be preferable to "was having an illness for many years" and would be understood in the same way).

On the other hand, not all aorists have been rendered as English pasts ("He did"), for some of them are clearly to be rendered as English perfects ("He has done"), or even as past perfects ("He had done"), judging from the context in which they occur. Such aorists have been rendered as perfects or past perfects in this translation.

As for the distinction between aorist and present imperatives, the translators have usually rendered these imperatives in the customary manner, rather than attempting any such fine distinction as "Begin to do!" (for the aorist imperative), or, "Continually do!" (for the present imperative).

As for sequence of tenses, the translators took care to follow English rules rather than Greek in translating Greek presents, imperfects and aorists. Thus, where English says, "We knew that he was doing," Greek puts it, "We knew that he does"; similarly, "We knew that he had done" is the Greek, "We knew that he did." Likewise, the English, "When he had come, they met him," is represented in Greek by: "When he came, they met him." In all cases a consistent transfer has been made from the Greek tense in the subordinate clause to the appropriate tense in English.

In the rendering of negative questions introduced by the particle *me* (which always expects the answer "No") the wording has been altered from a mere, "Will he not do this?" to a more accurate, "He will not do this, will he?"

4) Explanation of General Format

See page 20 for examples of the following—

Notes And Cross References are placed in a column adjoining the text on the page and listed under verse numbers to which they refer. Superior numbers refer to literal renderings, alternate translations, or explanations. Superior letters refer to cross references. Cross references in italics are parallel passages.

These notes and cross references are very helpful for comparing Scripture with Scripture. Often the other passages give additional historical details, similar or the same events, doctrinal similarities, or the same word used.

The notes will explain names, weights, measures, and points of history and geography.

Paragraphs are designated by bold face verse numbers or letters.

Quotation Marks are used in the text in accordance with modern English usage.

"Thou," "Thee" and "Thy" are not used in this edition and have been rendered as "you" and "your."

Personal Pronouns are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

Italics are used in the text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it. Italics are used in the marginal notes to signify alternate readings for the text. Roman text in the marginal alternate readings is the same as italics in the Bible text.

Normally we use *italics* to emphasize something—"Frieda, don't you *dare* do that!" English translations of the Bible use them for a very different purpose, as noted above.

The reason for this is that Hebrew and Greek say things differently than we do in English, so it is necessary to "add" words in English to make sense of it (cf. Gen 1:16; John 1:8). These are helpful and usually correct, but sometimes not! For example—

2 Samuel 1:18 "also he bade them teach the children of Judah *the use of* the bow: behold, *it is* written in the book of Jasher" (KJV). "The use of" should be "the song of," which the context makes clear.

Galatians 3:24 "Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ" (NASB; cf. also KJV "*to bring us*"). "To lead us" misses the sense of the Greek preposition, better translated "until."

SMALL CAPS in the New Testament are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts. Variations of Old Testament wording are found in New Testament citations depending on whether the New Testament writer translated from a Hebrew text, used existing Greek or Aramaic translations, or paraphrased the material. It should be noted that modern rules for the indication of direct quotation were not used in biblical times; thus, the ancient writer would use exact quotations or references to quotation without specific indication of such.

ACTS 2

YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF
  GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.'
29 "¹Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the ᵃpatriarch David that he both ᵇdied and ᶜwas buried, and ᵈhis tomb is ²with us to this day. 30 And so, because he was ᵃa prophet and knew that ᵇGOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* ¹OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of ¹the Christ, that ᵃHE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh ²SUFFER DECAY. 32 This Jesus ᵃGod raised up again, to which we are all ᵇwitnesses. 33 Therefore having been exalted ¹ᵃto the right hand of God, and ᵇhaving received from the Father ᶜthe promise of the Holy Spirit, He has ᵈpoured forth this which you both see and hear. 34 For it was not David who ascended into ¹heaven, but he himself says:

'ᵃTHE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,
  "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A
    FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET." '
36 Therefore let all the ᵃhouse of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both ᵇLord and ¹Christ–this Jesus ᶜwhom you crucified."

A Star (*) is used to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

"More literal rendering"

Alternative rendering

Bold-number for new paragraph

Cross-reference

Italics

COLOSSIANS 1, 2

The Incomparable Christ

13 ¹For He rescued us from the ²ᵃdomain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of ³ᵇHis beloved Son, **14** ᵃin whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

15 ¹He is the ᵃimage of the ᵇinvisible God, the ᶜfirstborn of all creation. **16** For ¹ᵃby Him all things were created, ᵃ*both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether ᵇthrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—ᶜall things have been created through Him and for Him. **17** He ¹ᵃis before all things, and in Him all things ²hold together. **18** He is also ᵃhead of ᵇthe body, the church; and He is ᶜthe beginning, ᵈthe firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. **19** For ¹it was ᵃthe *Father's* good pleasure for all ᵇthe ²fullness to dwell in Him, **20** and through Him to ᵃreconcile all things to Himself, having made ᵇpeace through ᶜthe blood of His cross; through Him, I say, ᵈwhether things on earth or things in ¹heaven.

13 ¹ Lit *Who rescued* ² Lit *authority* ³ Lit *the Son of His love* ᵃ Eph 6:12 ᵇ Eph 1:6
14 ᵃ Rom 3:24
15 ¹ Lit *Who is* ᵃ 2 Cor 4:4 ᵇ John 1:1 ᶜ Rom 8:29
16 ¹ Or *in* ᵃ Eph 1:10 ᵇ Eph 1:20f; Col 2:15 ᶜ John 1:3; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6
17 ¹ Or *has existed prior to* ² Or *endure* ᵃ John 1:1; 8:58
18 ᵃ Eph 1:22 ᵇ Eph 1:23; Col 1:24; 2:19 ᶜ Rev 3:14 ᵈ Acts 26:23
19 ¹ Or *all the fullness was*

D. Chapters and verses

Today our Bibles are divided into chapters and verses so we can easily find different passages. These are a real help to studying the Bible, but there are some important things to know about them.

1) The English Bible has 1,189 chapters and 31,173 verses.

2) When the different OT and NT books were written, there were **no** chapter or verse divisions. The closest thing we have to inspired "divisions" in Scripture are a few OT passages that are in acrostic form (such as Psalm 119 and Lamentations).

3) In **1205** Archbishop Stephen Langton introduced chapter divisions.

4) OT verse divisions are based largely on Hebrew punctuation marks. The current verse divisions were done around 1440.

5) The NT verse divisions as we have them now were done by Robert Estienne (in Latin, *Robert Stephanus*). In **1551** he published his 4th edition of the Greek NT, and it was with this edition of the NT that our current chapter and verse divisions began. This edition of the Greek NT was the basis for Luther's translation, Tyndale's translation, and the KJV.[1]

6) It's impossible to imagine what life would be like without book, chapter, and verse divisions. Finding passages would take a *long* time without them. They are definitely helpful in this respect.

7) However, as they are not inspired, there can be some challenges—

   a. It can be easy to take something out of its **context**.

   b. Sometimes the chapter divisions are **wrong**. For example, consider Daniel 10–11, Matthew 16:28–17:1, and 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1. This has the effect of "chopping up" the flow of thought, making it harder to understand the text.

   c. The verses too often break up sentences, which also "chops up" the flow of thought, impeding understanding.

   d. A helpful solution to these challenges are Bibles that connect the verses together into sentences and paragraphs (see p. 20 for an example). Every NASB identifies the beginning of a paragraph by **boldfacing** the verse number. Some editions of the NASB (and other translations) put the verses into paragraph format. Other versions will sometimes use the " ¶ " sign to identify the beginning of a new paragraph.

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[1] As an aside, Stephanus's edition of the Greek NT was based on the work of Desidirius Erasmus (1466–1536). The 1551 edition was the result of comparing about 14 Greek manuscripts, the earliest of which was from the 1000s. Only *one* of these manuscripts had the Book of Revelation, and that one didn't have the last six verses. To fix this problem, Erasmus translated them back into Greek from his Latin Bible!